

‘We’re not selling the parcel just for the sake of selling it.’

BRIAN GOLDEN, *Boston Planning & Development Agency director*



DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

Putting a real price on city land

Agency thinks twice about developer’s \$55,000 offer for tiny slice of Seaport — now it’s \$1.95m

By Tim Logan
GLOBE STAFF

In the ever-more-expensive Seaport district, even the sidewalks can come at a steep price.

Developer Jon Cronin has reached a deal with the City of Boston to buy about 3,000 square feet of the city’s sidewalk outside two waterfront bars he owns — for \$1.95 million.

That may sound outrageous for a modest patch of concrete — even in a town where parking spaces can sell for more than \$300,000 — but Cronin didn’t have much choice. Without the tiny triangular-shaped plot, the developer won’t have enough space for a \$260-million luxury condo tower he wants to build at

150 Seaport Blvd., on the site of the Whiskey Priest and Atlantic Beer Garden bars.

Last year, Cronin offered to pay a lot less for the property — a mere \$55,000 — based on appraisals he had done that compared it to other unusable slivers of land in Roxbury, Dorchester, and the South End. He argued that the sidewalk was essentially of no use to any other potential buyer.

That seemed to make sense to the Boston Planning & Development Agency, which indicated it was willing to accept Cronin’s offer. Until it wasn’t.

Following a Globe story on the proposed agreement, and an ensuing

SEAPORT SIDEWALK, Page A7

Expensive tiny plots

\$1.95 million

SEAPORT SIDEWALK, about 3,000 square feet, will be bought from the city by a developer. approximately \$633 per square foot

\$430,000

A PARKING SPACE at the Brimmer Street Garage on Beacon Hill sold for \$430,000 in June. approximately \$2,828 per square foot



DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF

\$225,000 average

PIERCE CONDO TOWER “sky cabanas” in Back Bay are still available; three of 12 have sold at \$175,000 to \$275,000 each. approximately \$1,125 per square foot



PIERCE BOSTON

Boston pays nearly \$1m after audit

Broad mismanagement with payrolls, school activity accounts cited by IRS

By James Vaznis
GLOBE STAFF

The City of Boston paid nearly \$1 million in penalties to the federal government after an IRS audit revealed wide-ranging problems with the city’s payrolls, from schools paying stipends to individuals under the table to the city failing to deduct Medicare withholding taxes for many employees, according to findings released Tuesday by the city.

In all, the IRS issued seven findings, four of which centered on mismanagement of student activity accounts at more than a dozen Boston schools. The three other findings focused on city payrolls. In addition to the Medicare deductions, the city was cited for a failure to deduct “deferred compensation” for some employees who do not qualify for the city’s pension plan and overtaxing some earn-



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

Mayor Martin J. Walsh said he has discussed the audit with School Department chief Tommy Chang.

ings.

The IRS described broad financial dysfunction in the School Department’s oversight of the funds and listed myriad excuses from school employees: “The individuals responsible for the school activity funds had various reasons for not having

BOSTON, Page A6

Tax overhaul nears a full Senate vote

Talks on averting a shutdown stall after Trump tweet

By Alan Rappeport and Thomas Kaplan
NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans took a significant step toward passing a sweeping tax overhaul on Tuesday, with a key panel giving its approval and several wavering senators indicating they would support the tax package, helping to clear the way for full Senate consideration later this week.

The chances for the tax overhaul, which seemed uncertain on Monday, strengthened considerably on Tuesday after the Senate Budget Committee voted along party lines to advance the plan. A flurry of last-minute dealmaking helped garner the support of a few Republican

Judge backs Trump on consumer panel

An appeal by the number two official at the watchdog agency to serve as acting director was denied, meaning budget director Mick Mulvaney will fill the position. **A2.**

lawmakers who had expressed concerns about the \$1.5 trillion package, including its treatment of small businesses and its effect on the deficit.

The rapid turnaround underlines the pressure Republicans face to pass a tax cut and notch a significant legislative victory in their first year of controlling both Congress and the White House. To help push the effort forward, President Trump went to Capitol Hill Tuesday for a lunch meeting with Republican senators, where he made promises to

TAXES, Page A9



For Clinton, a hero’s welcome

Appearing at the Opera House to promote her book about the 2016 election, she told the sold-out crowd: “I used to feel like I had to be careful in public, to keep my guard up. Well, those days are over.” **B16.**

Former White House spokesman Anthony Scaramucci resigned from an advisory board at Tufts University after an uproar on the campus about free speech. **B1.**

North Korea appears to have launched another intercontinental ballistic missile, and experts calculate that Washington, D.C., is now within Kim Jong Un’s reach. **A4.**

A controversial Gloucester lawyer who had been seeking a district court judgeship is facing domestic abuse charges after his wife obtained a restraining order. **B1.**

The Net neutrality “apocalypse” is really just hype, and ultimately very little will change, writes Tech Lab columnist Hiawatha Bray. **B11.**

Piecrust anxiety? Here are some tips to cure it. **G1.**



Unwrapper’s delight

Wednesday: Much warmer. High 53-58. Low 28-33.

Thursday: Chill returns. High 41-46. Low 38-43.

High tide: 6:58 a.m., 7:21 p.m. Sunrise: 6:52 Sunset: 4:13

Complete report, **B10.**

THE POINT OF NO TURN

For a dogged flat-earther, it’s a lonely new world

By Dugan Arnett
GLOBE STAFF

It was 10 o’clock on a recent Sunday morning when Jason Torres steered his Ford pickup into the visitors lot at Castle Island, threw it into park, and stepped out.

Outside, the day was off to a dreary start. A steady rain was falling and the beach lot — typically brimming with cars — remained largely empty.

Not the best conditions for the task at hand, he acknowledged. But it would have to do.

Truth be told, there were few places Torres — 44, with shoulder-length black hair, a backwards hat, and a key chain that says “Zombie Killer” — would rather be. Just to get here this morning, he’d risen early, downed most of a pot of coffee, and made the hour-and-a-half drive from his home in tiny Mason, N.H.

There was work to be done, he knew, important work, and so here he was, gathering his tripod and camera and trudging through the parking lot, hood pulled against the rain.

In the 2½ years since stumbling upon an obscure YouTube video, Torres has devoted his life to a single, quixotic quest — one that, by his own admission, has upended his daily existence, cost him decades-long friendships, and left his longtime girlfriend wondering whether he’d lost his mind.

He has come to believe that everything we’ve been taught about our planet is a lie.

FLAT EARTH, Page A12



JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Jason Torres, of Mason, N.H., uses his camera to search for evidence of the Earth’s curvature. He says he hasn’t found any.

Holiday shopping gets off to a strong start

By Janelle Nanos
GLOBE STAFF

After a year that saw sluggish sales and a record number of store closures, more shoppers than expected turned out for the official kickoff to the holiday shopping season, and Monday was projected to break records for a single day of online shopping.

While analysts say it’s too soon to tally the total spending for the holiday weekend, a National Retail Federation survey found that 174 million Americans made purchases over the five-day weekend that included Thanksgiving — 10 million more than had been projected. The turnout has bolstered the outlook for retailers heading into the next few weeks of the holiday shopping season.

“The weekend looked and felt great, and the numbers validate that optimism,” said the federation’s president and chief executive, Matthew Shay. “The combination of high consumer sentiment and the health of the macroeconomy is a very good thing for the overall industry.”

SHOPPING, Page A7

VOL. 292, NO. 152

*

Suggested retail price
\$2.00



0 947725 4